

Message Text

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21

ACTION AID-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-06 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 RSC-01

CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

SCS-03 HEW-02 INR-07 PA-01 PRS-01 SCA-01 /053 W

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O 270712Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4733

INFO CINCPAC

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FOR AID/PHA/FDRC

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 116R52 N/A

TAGS: PFOR, AS

SUBJ: L ARGE-SCALE AUSTRALIAN EFFORTS TO RELIEVE DARWIN AFTER
DESTRUCTIVE CYCLONE DEC 25

REF: CANBERRA 8277, 8278

1. AUSTRALIAN PRESS AND MEDIA DEC 27 CONTINUE TO BE DOMINATED
BY REACTIONS TO EXTENSIVE DAMAGE TO DARWIN (NORTHERN
TERRITORY) BY CYCLONE TRACY DEC 25. PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM
HAS BROKEN OFF HIS SIX-WEEKS TOUR OF EUROPE TO RETURN TO
AUSTRALIA BY COMMERCIAL AIR. HE IS EXPECTED TO ARRIVE PERTH
EVENING OF DEC 27 (LOCAL TIME) AND FLY DIRECT TO DARWIN BY RAAF
AIRCRAFT. HE WILL HOLD CABINET MEETING IN SYDNEY DEC 30 TO
REVIEW SITUATION AND DECIDE ON FURTHER ACTION.

2. ACTING PRIME MINISTER CAIRNS VISITED DARWIN DEC 25 AND
COMMENTED TO PRESS THAT "DARWIN WILL BE REBUILT". HOWEVER,
MASSIVE EFFORT NOW UNDER WAY, USING MILITARY AND CIVILIAN
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AIRCRAFT TO "THIN OUT" POPULATION, PERHAPS BY AS MUCH AS 10,000

(OUT OF PRE-DISASTER POPULATION OF ABOUT 40,000). THREE RAN SHIPS (INCLUDING AIRCRAFT CARRIER HMAS MELBOURNE) LEFT SYDNEY DEC 26 FOR DARWIN AND FOUR MORE RAN SHIPS WILL LEAVE SYDNEY DEC 27 FOR SAME DESTINATION. SHIPS ARE CARRYING RELIEF SUPPLIES AND WILL PROVIDE EMERGENCY SERVICE.

3. USAF C-141 AIRCRAFT COMPLETED INITIAL ROUNDTRIP SYDNEY TO DARWIN 27 DECEMBER PER GOA REQUEST REPORTED CANBERRA 8278. SECOND ROUND-TRIP SCHEDULED 28 DECEMBER.

4. EMBASSY AND BRISBANE CONSULATE RECEIVING PHONE AND TELEX QUERIES FROM CONCERNED RELATIVES AND FRIENDS OF AMERICANS WHO WERE IN DARWIN. MASSIVE DESTRUCTION INCLUDING TOTAL BREAKDOWN OF COMMUNICATIONS TO DARWIN IS DELAYING CASUALTY INFORMATION. WE ARE INFORMED AUSTRALIAN AUTHORITIES HAVE BEEN AND WILL CONTINUE TO NOTIFY NEXT OF KIN OF THOSE WHO HAVE DIED, AS SOON AS IDENTIFICATION CAN BE MADE. EMBASSY HAS REQUESTED COMPLETE LIST OF CASUALTIES AS SOON AS AVAILABLE, IN ORDER TO ANSWER U.S. INQUIRIES. MEANWHILE, NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO HAVE INQUIRERS TELEPHONE CANBERRA POLICE AT TELEPHONE NUMBER 062-497-444.

5. COMMENT: WITH RELIEF SUPPLIES AND VOLUNTEERS NOW MOVING TO DARWIN FROM THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA, CLEAR THAT MOST OF RELIEF REQUIRED WILL BE PROVIDED BY AUSTRALIAN ORGANIZATIONS, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE. MOREOVER, RETURN OF PRIME MINISTER FROM EUROPEAN TRIP, WHICH HE VERY MUCH WANTED TO MAKE, INTRODUCES POLITICAL ELEMENT INTO DISASTER WHICH SHOULD MAKE U.S. CAUTIOUS ABOUT VOLUNTEERING ASSISTANCE. NO REASON TO QUESTION SINCERITY OF CONCERN BEING EXPRESSED BY PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET ABOUT DISASTER, BUT EPISODE PROVIDES GOVERNMENT WITH OPPORTUNITY TO DEMONSTRATE ITS CONCERN FOR PEOPLE, AFTER LONG SERIES OF ADVERSE DEVELOPMENTS DURING LAST SIX MONTHS OF 1974. LABOR GOVERNMENT WILL CERTAINLY WANT FULLY TO EXPLOIT ITS OWN EFFORTS IN DARWIN, AND WE WILL BE WELL ADVISED TO KEEP U.S. ASSISTANCE, EXCEPT THAT SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED, IN THE BACKGROUND.
SIMPSON

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